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Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. – 16. (cancelled)

17. (Currently amended) A system for managing a lifecycle of an electronic contract comprising:

at least two parties to share a business process represented by the electronic contract, each of the parties comprising at least one participant for performing an element of the shared business process, each of the parties exchanging key fingerprints associated with the electronic contract, negotiating the electronic contract, and digitally signing and verifying the electronic contract using the key fingerprints;

a role certificate for presentation by a first participant of a first party to a second participant of a second party to verify, according to trust rules defined in the electronic contract, that the first participant is authorized to perform at least part of the shared business process;

an archive agent coupled to the parties to store the signed and verified electronic contract; and

a purchase/subscribe agent coupled to the archive agent and the parties to receive registrations from the participants in order for the participants to be notified of at least one of changes to the shared business process, change of authority, and security compromises, and to distribute the signed and verified electronic contract to the registered participants; according to a publish and subscribe model.

~~wherein no dominant authority and no hierarchy of parties exists in the system, and wherein the parties enforce authorization of participants to perform elements of the shared business process without use of a trusted third party.~~

18. (Cancelled)

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19. (Cancelled)

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the parties cross-check each other's digital signatures on the electronic contract.

22. (Cancelled)

23. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the parties determine terms and conditions of the electronic contract and define allowable roles for participants and process elements.

24. (Cancelled)

25. (Cancelled)